

Burnley College

Inspection report

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Contents

Background information.....	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement.....	8
Main findings	9

Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Burnley College is a medium sized general further education (FE) college with four sites in the centre of Burnley. In September 2009 the college will move all its provision to a single site on a purpose built £80 million campus. Students are enrolled mainly from the town of Burnley and the surrounding area of East Lancashire, with just over half of learners living in widening participation post code areas. In 2007/08, 69% of students aged 16 to 18 were eligible for the educational maintenance allowance. Within the local area there is a school sixth form centre a mile from the college's main site and two FE Colleges within 10 miles.
2. Burnley is a multicultural borough with a population of around 90,000. Government statistics indicate that Burnley has significant levels of deprivation. Unemployment in the town is rising and is above the national rate. Of those in employment the average wage of the local area is 86% of the national rate. GCSE achievement of school leavers is well below the national average. A high proportion of students aged 16 to 18 enrolled at the college have not achieved grade C in English and mathematics, including 62% of those enrolled on a level 3 programme. Some 14% of learners are of minority ethnic origin compared with 8.2% in the local community.
3. The college offers courses in all 15 sector subject areas. Provision is small in some areas and the most significant are care, construction, engineering and skills for life. In most areas, qualifications are available from entry level to higher education (HE). In 2007/08, the college enrolled around 7,500 learners. Of these around 1,700 were full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 2,350 part-time adult students. The college delivers community provision in a range of venues in the local area, employer sponsored programmes to around 2,000 learners and an apprentice programme to 550 work-based learners. In partnership with the University of Central Lancashire the college has 700 HE students. In collaboration with 7 local schools around 500 learners aged 14 to 16 study level 1 and level 2 vocational courses.
4. The college's strategic purpose is to 'build futures and change lives' and it has established a clear set of annual goals to achieve this. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in textiles and fashion and care in the community.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: contributory grade 1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. Burnley College is outstanding. The college provides a very welcoming, safe and secure environment for learners from a diverse range of backgrounds and abilities. Success rates are high and improving. The success of apprentices and Train to Gain learners in the workplace is outstanding and they develop very good vocational skills. Key skills success rates are high. Learners aged 14 to 16 achieve well on their vocational courses at college and many progress to FE. Learners make exceptional progress in their time at college and many achieve grades higher than those predicted by their grades at enrolment. Personal and social development of learners is outstanding. Students' success is widely promoted and celebrated.
6. Teaching and learning are outstanding. The college has robust systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Good practice is shared widely. Highly effective and responsive staff development has led to a range of innovative teaching strategies, including the use of information learning technology (ILT), to support students' independent learning. Teaching is well planned and meets individual needs of learners very well. Students enjoy college and attendance is very good.
7. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. Equality and diversity permeate all aspects of the college and are promoted very well. Learners' behaviour and mutual respect are exemplary. An extensive range of courses, with clear progression routes, is offered to respond to and meet the needs of learners, employers and the local community. There are many initiatives to support vulnerable learners; for example, those with mental health problems. School links are highly effective. A broad range of enrichment activities enhances students' learning, personal development and employability skills. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Learners who require additional support are identified at enrolment and achieve well.
8. Leadership and management are outstanding. Visionary leadership of the principal, ably supported by senior managers and outstanding governance, provides a clear strategic direction to achieving excellence. Curriculum management is outstanding with a strong focus on improvement. Performance management and quality improvement are rigorous; alongside ambitious targets, they have led to significant improvements in standards. The college has accurately identified the small number of courses where success rates need to improve and is taking appropriate and prompt actions. Good use is made of the opinions of learners, employers and its partners to further improve provision. The self-assessment report is accurate although there is a lack of clarity in the actions in some of the curriculum reports. Financial management is strong. Improvements in accommodation and resources have been appropriately focused on supporting learners.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

9. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. Very effective leadership and the outstanding commitment of governors provide a clear strategic direction and have led to significant improvements and very high standards. Quality assurance and performance management place a strong focus on improving underperformance. Data are used very effectively to inform planning and business development. The self-assessment process and report are rigorous, inclusive and well understood by staff. Staff are supported well; development opportunities are very effective and closely aligned to appraisal. Staff morale is high with established systems for mentoring and sharing good practice. The small numbers of underperforming courses are very effectively monitored with clear strategies for improvement. Accommodation has been much improved; the new college campus is nearing completion, is on time and on budget.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

10. The college has made outstanding progress since the last inspection. The strengths identified at the last inspection have been maintained and further developed. Success rates, including work-based learning, have improved and are high. Strategies for improving teaching have been very successful. The average class size has improved, although the college recognises that a minority, particularly General Certificate of Education (GCE) A2 classes, remain small. Innovative projects to improve opportunities for learning have been developed. The college has further improved the safe and secure environment promoting social inclusion with a significant increase in the number of students from ethnic backgrounds. Equality and diversity permeate all aspects of the college. Students make good progress and most achieve better than predicted from their attainment at enrolment. Internal verification is now systematic. After the last inspection accommodation was immediately improved, particularly in construction and arts and media.

Key strengths

- highly inclusive college that vigorously pursues equality and diversity
- high and improving success rates
- outstanding personal development and progress of learners
- innovative and very effective teaching strategies that support students' independent learning
- outstanding range of provision and enrichment opportunities
- excellent personal and academic support for students
- very productive partnerships
- excellent contribution to the local community and employer engagement
- visionary and highly effective strategic leadership
- open and supportive management with a strong focus on improvement
- outstanding governance
- highly effective quality improvement and performance management
- very responsive and innovative staff development.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates on a minority of courses
- clarity in recording actions in curriculum self-assessment reports.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

11. In agreement with the college's own assessment, achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates are high and improving. Students make outstanding progress in their time at the college. The overall success rate on long courses has consistently increased since the last inspection and in 2008 was well above the 2007 national average. Success rates on short courses are very high. There are no significant differences in the performance between different groups of students. Overall, learners who receive additional support achieve in line with the high success rates of other students in the college.
12. Success rates on level 1 courses have increased considerably and have been consistently above the national average in the last three years. On level 2 and level 3 programmes, the college has maintained high success rates. Retention rates on level 1 and level 2 courses are very high. Pass rates on many courses are very high and in several areas all students who complete the course achieve their qualification. The college recognises that success rates on GCE AS courses need to improve.
13. In their time at college students make exceptional progress. Around half the college students are from disadvantaged backgrounds and many have low self-esteem and poor experiences in education. The college has successfully introduced appropriate strategies to improve success rates in GCSEs. The high grade pass rate in mathematics and English is now very good. On their main courses most students achieve grades above those predicted by their previous qualifications. GCE A2 and national diploma students make outstanding progress and their value added places the college in the top 10% nationally. Many students successfully achieve additional qualifications to improve their employability skills. In a wide range of areas students achieve local and national recognition for their skills in prestigious competitions and awards. Key skills success rates are high and improving.
14. Progression rates between courses are very good, although there is scope for improvement in the proportion of students who continue from GCE AS courses to the full A level. The number of students progressing to HE is excellent. A high proportion of apprentices progress to advanced programmes.
15. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are outstanding and most learners achieve in the allocated time. Learners in employment improve their vocational skills and confidence in carrying out their job roles. For many learners their literacy and numeracy skills are enhanced. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes are high. The achievement and progression of learners on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes are very good. Students aged 14 to 16 achieve well on their vocational courses and the progression rate into FE when they leave school is excellent.

16. Students are respectful of each other, the staff of the college and visitors. Personal development is exceptional and students respond very well to the positive learning environment. Students adopt a mature approach to learning, behaviour is excellent, they enjoy their time at college and attendance is high.
17. The standard of students' work is high. Students take pride in how their work is presented and in most courses they have well organised portfolios. The college recognises and promotes students' achievements in many ways and this is valued by learners.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

18. The quality of provision is outstanding. As correctly identified in the self-assessment report, teaching and learning are outstanding. The lesson observation system is thorough and robust; inspectors confirmed its accuracy. The college's high targets for the proportion of good or better teaching have been exceeded. Lessons judged to be less than good result in systematic staff development and timely re-observation to confirm improvement.
19. Good practice in teaching is systematically shared. Teachers plan lessons well, setting very clear objectives and providing a range of interesting and challenging activities to engage learners. Learners are strongly encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their own learning. The effective and in many instances innovative use of ILT, is a key feature of most lessons. Teachers are well qualified and extensively use their own industrial and commercial experiences to enhance lessons. Learners on apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes also experience particularly good on-the-job training.
20. Innovative strategies promote and enable students' independent learning. A comprehensive staff development programme is highly effective in improving teaching strategies. Learning is enhanced in the 'active learning zones' where students can access ILT and specialist resources. The virtual learning environment is increasingly becoming a key resource to support learners although the pace of its development differs across the college.
21. Assessment is fair, accurate and reliable. Well planned assignments help learners manage their time effectively. Most marked work is returned promptly with detailed and constructive comments. Learners on apprenticeships and Train to Gain also receive thorough assessment and detailed feedback although insufficient use is made of milestone targets in planning individual learning and reviewing learner progress. Internal verification is thorough and meets or exceeds awarding body requirements.
22. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. A particularly wide range of provision provides learners with excellent progression routes from entry level through to HE. An extensive range of apprenticeships and Train to Gain provides high quality training opportunities to meet the needs of local employers. Learners' progression through these routes is good. Learners speak enthusiastically about the college, feel it is a

- safe place to learn and clearly enjoy their studies. Key skills are fully integrated in the vocational curriculum.
23. Partnership working is highly effective in meeting local needs. Employers' needs are paramount in the design of apprenticeships and Train to Gain provision. New National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) qualifications have been designed and accredited to meet specific local needs; for example, in the aerospace industry.
 24. For many learners the outstanding enrichment programme enhances their experience of college. A wide range of activities is available and learners' feedback significantly contributes to designing a programme meeting their needs. For example, following requests from learners, a cheerleading team was introduced which subsequently won a national competition. Activities clearly link to the Every Child Matters themes. A significant number of learners achieve externally accredited qualifications through enrichment.
 25. Care, guidance and support for learners are outstanding. This agrees with the college's own judgement in the self-assessment report. Tutorial provision is excellent and highly regarded by students. Weekly group tutorial sessions cover a range of interesting and useful topics, such as health issues, careers guidance and money management. Students have regular one-to-one sessions with their tutors where their progress is effectively monitored against their targets. Students feel very well supported and are confident that help is always available should they need it. Tutors are highly committed and well supported in their role with training and resources.
 26. An extensive range of support services is available and equally accessible to full-time learners, part-time learners, those in the workplace and those accessing learning in the community. Additional learning support is very effective. All learners are assessed at the start of their course and offered relevant targeted support. In addition to specific targeted support, students can attend workshops to help them with literacy and numeracy, subject issues and general study skills. Student participation, including those in the workplace, is high. All full-time learners without English or mathematics at GCSE grade A* to C are required to take an appropriate qualification. Learners on entry and level 1 provision receive an entitlement to specified one-to-one and group support. Evaluation shows that those learners accessing support achieve high success rates.
 27. Students are supported very well in making career and course choices. There are high progression rates both internally and on to HE and employment. There is close tracking of early leavers and data are well used to evaluate initiatives and plan further improvements. Parents and carers receive detailed information about their son or daughter's progress.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Contributory grade:
Equality of opportunity*

Outstanding: grade 1

28. Inspectors agree with the college that leadership and management are outstanding. The principal, senior managers and governors provide very strong strategic leadership which has successfully improved success rates and the quality of the provision to outstanding. Development planning is systematic and robust. The college's progress against challenging targets is rigorously monitored. The college has high expectations of all staff who share in the common vision of working to achieve excellence. Staff roles, responsibilities and the lines of accountability are clear. Staff contribute to the annual strategic review, they respond well to challenging targets and morale is high.
29. The college is a key partner in the social and economic regeneration of the borough and responds well to local community needs. The college's membership of local collaborative and strategic groups is used well to inform planning and development. Employer engagement is very effective and the college has successfully developed provision to reflect employment needs. The college has very productive links with local schools.
30. Governance is outstanding. Governors are committed to the college's success and have a broad range of skills to support and challenge managers effectively. Robust systems are in place to provide governors with high quality information to enable them to evaluate progress against the college's key performance indicators.
31. Financial management is outstanding. Since the last inspection much investment has taken place in improving accommodation and resources to support learners. The new college campus is nearing completion and is on time and to budget. The college provides outstanding value for money.
32. The college quality improvement arrangements are very strong. Lesson observations are rigorous and closely linked to sharing good practice and very effective staff development. Staff induction is highly supportive. A comprehensive appraisal system is closely aligned to staff development and strategic objectives. Curriculum management is outstanding with a clear focus on correcting underperformance and ensuring that improvements take place. Strategies to improve retention have been successful. The management information system very effectively informs corporate and curriculum decision making. Data are well used to monitor and evaluate student and subject performance.
33. The self-assessment process involves all staff and is thorough, robust and rigorous. Excellent use has been made of the views of learners, parents and employers to inform the process. The overall college report is comprehensive and accurately reflects the provision. However, at curriculum level some reports do not clearly identify actions required to meet targets to address areas for improvement.

34. Equality of opportunity is outstanding and this agrees with the colleges own self-assessment. Equality and diversity permeate all aspects of the college. The college fulfils its obligations in relation to race, gender and disability legislation. The college has appropriate arrangements in place to meet government requirements on safeguarding and child protection. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased to 14% and is above the 8.2% found in the surrounding area. Data are analysed thoroughly by gender, ethnicity, age and disadvantaged areas and identifies that there are no underperforming groups. Gender stereotyping is very effectively challenged in events which enable learners to access taster sessions in non-traditional vocational areas. The college has effectively supported apprentices who have been made redundant, helping them complete their qualification. Standards of behaviour are clearly understood by students and inappropriate behaviour is very effectively challenged. A high level of mutual respect exists in the college's harmonious and inclusive environment. Equality and diversity are embedded in the curriculum and opportunities are used in tutorials to widen learners' understanding. Events to celebrate cultural differences are sensitively used to promote tolerance and respect.

Learner's achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long – Level 1	05/06	1135	74	69	5	1088	67	65	2
	06/07	1049	80	74	6	712	75	70	5
	07/08	1047	83	NA		511	80	NA	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08								
NVQs	05/06	9	89	72	17	1	100	74	26
	06/07	9	89	75	14	1	100	75	25
	07/08	18	72	NA		-	-	-	-
Other	05/06	1126	74	69	5	1087	67	65	2
	06/07	1040	80	74	6	711	75	70	5
	07/08	1029	84	NA		511	80	NA	

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008 compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long – Level 2	05/06	1377	83	66	17	977	78	66	12
	06/07	837	80	70	10	622	78	69	9
	07/08	682	81	NA		532	75	NA	
GCSEs	05/06	130	68	68	0	153	67	67	0
	06/07	128	80	71	9	87	85	70	15
	07/08	157	83			76	88	NA	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	7	100	73	27	...	...	...	...
	07/08	25	56	NA		10	70		
NVQs	05/06	37	78	65	13	96	95	68	27
	06/07	59	68	68	0	52	87	69	18
	07/08	45	67	NA		74	80	NA	
Other	05/06	1210	85	67	18	728	79	65	14
	06/07	644	81	70	11	484	76	69	7
	07/08	455	83	NA		372	71	NA	

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long – Level 3	05/06	1145	75	71	4	730	68	64	4
	06/07	1270	76	73	3	521	75	68	7
	07/08	1234	79	NA		496	73	NA	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	178	91	87	4	6	50	72	-22
	06/07	218	90	87	3	17	82	76	6
	07/08	276	95	NA		8	50	NA	
AS Levels	05/06	508	74	67	7	12	67	55	12
	06/07	528	75	69	6	4	100	59	41
	07/08	498	70	NA		5	80	NA	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	57	88	66	22	18	89	57	32
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQs	05/06	6	67	71	-4	145	77	64	13
	06/07	31	16	74	-58	154	77	69	8
	07/08	15	47	NA		77	70	NA	
Other	05/06	396	69	65	4	549	67	64	3
	06/07	496	75	70	5	426	77	69	8
	07/08	445	80	NA		406	73	NA	

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the college 2006 to 2008

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	121	78.5	52.3	62.8	42.9
		timely	142	54.9	34.0	43.0	27.3
	06/07	overall	104	78.8	62.8	55.8	56.4
		timely	71	66.2	42.7	49.3	38.1
	07/08#	overall	124	83.9	67.8	77.4	62.8
		timely	118	85.6	48.2	78.8	44.0
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	150	68.0	57.2	63.3	51.5
		timely	163	35.0	37.1	30.7	33.4
	06/07	overall	194	77.3	64.4	71.6	60.2
		timely	145	40.0	47.1	36.6	44.5
	07/08#	overall	61	85.2	67.3	83.6	64.4
		timely	54	85.2	52.4	83.3	50.1

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

When available and validated by the LSC

Table 5a

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the college 2007 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	81	94
		timely	81	94
	2007/08	overall	145	80
		timely	145	80
	2008/09 (6 months)	overall	119	79
		timely	19	13

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first six months of the LSC contract year

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college prior to inspection

Table 5b

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life programmes managed by the college 2007 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	15	73
		timely	15	73
	2007/08	overall	42	71
		timely	42	71
	2008/09 (6 months)	overall	50	100
		timely	50	82

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first six months of the LSC contract year

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college prior to inspection

Table 6

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2007 to 2009

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate* (%)	Progression rate** (%)
2006/07	137	82	69
2007/08	150	78	67
2008/09 (6 months)	74	73	32

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the six months of the LSC contract year

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period.

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college prior to inspection